

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9134

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USUN NEW YORK 434

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5403

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SY LE

SUBJ: CURRENT STATUS OF NORTH LEBANON

1. EMBOFF MET RECENTLY WITH GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHBISHOP KURBAN OF TRIPOLI, AND SEPARATELY WITH STANLEY MITTON OF WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES EMERGENCIES OFFICE WHO TOGETHER TOURED MUCH OF NORTH LEBANON REGION DURING PAST TEN DAYS. THEY STATED THAT TRIPOLI RINGED FROM NORTH, EAST AND SOUTH BY CHRISTIAN AND SYRIAN FORCES. THEY VISITED CHRISTIAN ARTILLERY BATTERY SOUTH OF TRIPOLI, AND LEARNED SHOOTING TAKING PLACE DAILY BETWEEN TRIPOLITANIANS AND ZGHORTAWIS. IN NORTH, SYRIAN TROOPS HAVE OCCUPIED AKKAR PLAIN UP TO PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF AKKAR AND PRESSING TO CAPTURE TURBIL MOUNTAINS. SYRIAN TROOPS NO FARTHER THAN OUTSKIRTS OF NAHR AL-BARID PALESTINIAN CAMP. SOURCES DESCRIBED SYRIAN TROOPS AS WELL-DISCIPLINED AND RESPONSIVE TO PLEAS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LOST PROPERTY OR WHOSE SECURITY THREATENED. THEY ALSO GAVE PHALANGE HIGH MARKS FOR DISCIPLINE ON  
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CHRISTIAN SIDE, BUT CHAMOUNISTS CONSIDERED LESS WELL-

BEHAVED AND MARONITE MOUNTAINEERS COMPLETELY UNDISCIPLINED.

2. WITHIN TRIPOLI THERE IS VERY LITTLE ORDER AMONG LEFTIST FORCES. PDFLP HAS BROKEN INTO THREE FACTIONS, INCLUDING THOSE RELATIVELY PRO-SYRIAN AND THOSE ANTI-SYRIAN AS WELL AS THIRD FACTION WHOSE VIEWS UNCLEAR, ACCORDING TO KURBAN. ICRC RELIEF MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED BY GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PREVIOUSLY BY COMMUNISTS, UNTIL LATTER DISCOVERED STAMPING BAGS OF SUPPLIES WITH NOTATION THEY GIFT OF COMMUNIST PARTY. TRIPOLI HARBOR STILL OPEN TWO WEEKS AGO, WHEN KURBAN DEPARTED TRIPOLI TO MEET MITTON IN SYRIA AND ESCORT HIM THROUGH CHRISTIAN LEBANON.

3. SOURCES TRAVELED EXTENSIVELY THROUGH KOURA REGION. THEY SAID IT LARGELY DESERTED BY GREEK ORTHODOX, WHO FLED INTO TRIPOLI PRIOR TO MARONITE OCCUPATION OF AREA. IN VILLAGE OF ANTOURA, FOR EXAMPLE, 1500 PEOPLE OUT OF ORIGINAL POPULATION OF 6000 REMAINED BEHIND, AND THESE MOST ELDERLY FAMILIES. LOOTING OF KOURA BY MARONITES ALMOST TOTAL, BUT FEW CASUALTIES APPARENTLY ON EITHER SIDE. MITTON EXPLAINED THIS BY REITERATING THAT BULK OF POPULATION HAD FLED.

4. KURBAN SAID MARONITE MONKS AND TONY FRANGIE CONTINUE TO TALK SERIOUSLY ABOUT CREATION OF "MARONITE NATION" (UMMA MARUNIYYA).

5. MITTON SAID HE SAW TROOPS IN BEIRUT WHO GHASSAN TWEINI'S DRIVER TOLD HIM WERE IRAQI, BUT MITTON COULD NOT CONFIRM PRESENCE OF IRAQI FORCES IN NORTH LEBANON.

6. MANY CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS FROM LEBANON WHO VISIT SYRIA -- OFTEN UNANNOUNCED -- PAY VISITS TO LOCAL GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE. DURING PAST WEEK LOCAL BISHOP JIBRAN RECEIVED WORD THAT GHASSAN TWEINI MIGHT BE PLANNING TO PAY VISIT TO DAMASCUS TO MEET WITH PATRIARCH ELIAS IV, BUT VISIT WOULD DEPEND UPON SUCCESS  
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IN ARRANGING SEPARATE MEETING WITH ASAD OR OTHER SUITABLE HIGH-RANKING SARG OFFICIAL. FUAD LAHOUD, DEPUTY FROM METN REGION, WAS IN DAMASCUS LAST WEEK.

7. COMMENT: ABOVE INDICATES FORCES IN NORTH LEBANON DO NOT APPEAR PRESENTLY INTERESTED IN OCCUPYING TRIPOLI BUT RATHER CONCENTRATING ON MAINTAINING SIEGE OF NAHR AL-BARID CAMP AND CONSOLIDATING THEIR

HOLD ON AKKAR REGION.

MURPHY

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